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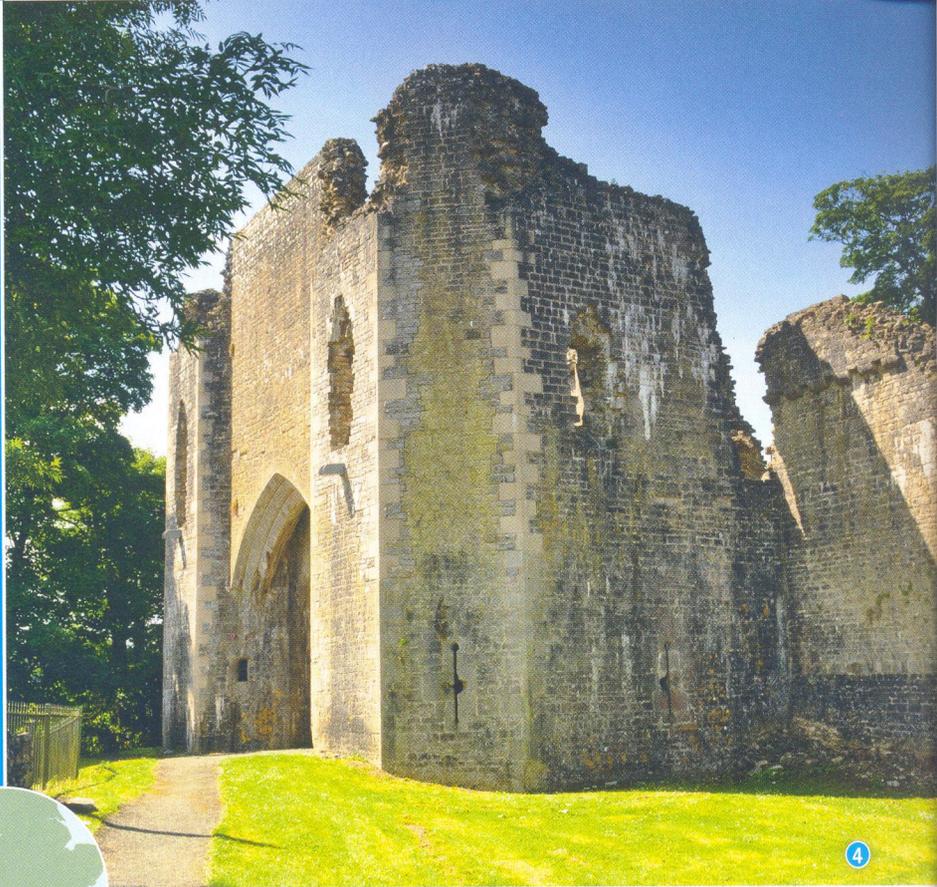
# Cowbridge

Vale of Glamorgan

Two castles, a Welsh vineyard and oodles of independent shops: we show you how to live like a king in Cowbridge

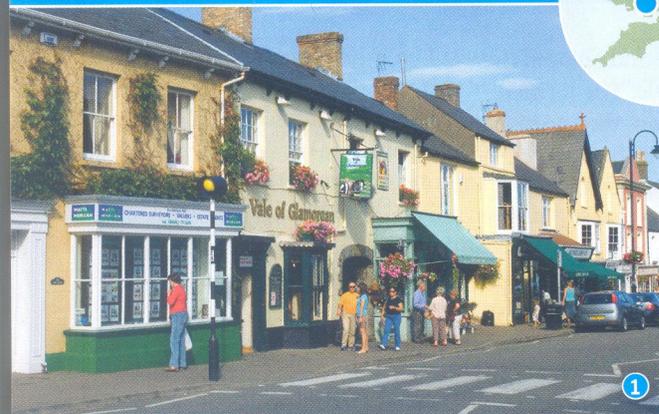
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- 1 Explore the quirky delights of Cowbridge's high street
- 2 The Physic Garden can cure all your ills
- 3 Learn all about Welsh wine at Glyndwr vineyard
- 4 Was St Quentin's Castle ever finished?
- 5 Discover family drama amid the deserted ruins of Beaupre Castle



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**N**estled in the Vale of Glamorgan, this affluent market town buzzes with well-heeled shoppers browsing the medley of boutiques and delis. But with two castles within two miles and robust stone walls, it's clear that Cowbridge was once a centre of power in Wales. Delve into its history and present-day pleasures with our quick guide.

### 10 am Beupre Castle

More of a fortified manor house than a castle, what Beupre lacks in portcullises, it makes up for in family drama. The Bassett family lived here from around 1300 until the early 18th century. They didn't shy from confrontation and their family motto: "Better death than dishonour," chiselled in Welsh above the Renaissance porch, gives a clue to their character. Bitter feuds with neighbours routinely ended in violence – a dispute over the price of oats once ended in a sword fight. Although powerful in Tudor times, the Bassetts took the side of King Charles I in the Civil War and their fortunes declined. Note the bricked up windows, blocked to avoid window tax.

### 11 am St Quentin's Castle

The name St Quentin's Castle is misleading – this castle in Llanblethian was started by Gilbert de Clare, a young lord in Edward II's army who fought to maintain English rule over Scotland. In 1312, Robert the Bruce besieged Stirling Castle while Edward (along with Gilbert and 500 of his knights) marched north. When Gilbert advised the king to let the men rest, Edward accused Gilbert of cowardice. Dismayed, Gilbert led his men into battle and was killed at 23 years old. The weakness in the curtain wall and the lack of internal buildings suggest that this castle was never completed. The hummocky grass inside is a great spot for a picnic.

### 12 pm Town walls & market

Until the 18th century, Cowbridge was the largest town in Wales and its 13th-century walls have seen scores of farmers paying tolls at its gates. Today, it's the only town in the old county of Glamorgan to retain its walls – you can walk through the South Gate on Church Street.

### 12.30pm Physic Garden

For a moment of calm, call in to the volunteer-run Physic Garden where you'll find medicinal plants, set out in order of ailment: nettles, liquorice and fennel for your liver; scarlet pimpernel and meadowsweet for your nerves. The layout is typical of an 18th garden – formal

and functional – and you'll only find plants grown before 1800.

📍 [www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk](http://www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk)

### 1 pm The High Street

Known as the Bond Street of Wales, the high street is a hub for independent boutiques. Venture off the thoroughfare to explore Old Mason's Yard, for homeware and haberdashery, or Happy Days on Church Street for vintage goods.

### 3 pm Glyndwr Vineyard

"Everyone said you couldn't make wine in Wales," Richard Norris told me. "When we started in 1982, we were faced with a ploughed field and a planting time of 20 minutes per vine." Undeterred, Richard and his wife Sue planted 3,000 in their first year. They then spent the next two years pinching off flower heads. In year three, they picked their first crop. Now the oldest of 14 Welsh vineyards, Glyndwr boasts 6,000 vines over six acres of southeast-facing slopes and produces six wines. Parties of 12 or more can book wine-tasting tours, while small groups can walk llamas through the vineyard before enjoying wine and a meal (both by appointment).  
📍 [www.glyndwrvineyard.co.uk](http://www.glyndwrvineyard.co.uk)

### 7 pm Welsh supper and tapas

Above Tesco on the high street, Bar 44 serves well-priced (and Welsh inspired) Spanish tapas: dates wrapped in local streaky bacon and Welsh rump steak served Catalan style. Oscars of Cowbridge serves up more of the same creative Welsh medleys, such as Monmouthshire lamb kofka and free-range woodland pork with pok choi and peanut cracking. 📍

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

##### HOW TO GET THERE

Cowbridge is 14 miles west of Cardiff on the A48. The X2 bus runs twice hourly from Cardiff.

##### FIND OUT MORE:

Cowbridge Physic Garden is accessible for wheelchairs via a ramp on Church Street. Beupre Castle is accessed via stiles and a short walk over fields. Uneven ground at St Quentin's Castle means wheelchair access is limited.

📍 [exploreandmore.co.uk](http://exploreandmore.co.uk)  
📍 [www.cowbridge.co.uk](http://www.cowbridge.co.uk)

##### EAT

**Bar 44**  
44c High Street,  
Cowbridge CF71 7AG  
☎ 01446 776488  
📍 [www.bar44.co.uk](http://www.bar44.co.uk)

**Oscars of Cowbridge**  
65 High Street,  
Cowbridge CF71 7AF  
☎ 01446 771984  
📍 [oscarsofcowbridge.com](http://oscarsofcowbridge.com)

##### STAY

**Crossways House Hotel**  
Cowbridge CF71 7LJ  
☎ 01446 773171  
📍 [crosswayshouse.co.uk](http://crosswayshouse.co.uk)  
17th-century manor house

**Glyndwr B&B**  
Llanblethian CF71 7JF  
☎ 01446 774564  
📍 [glyndwrvineyard.co.uk](http://glyndwrvineyard.co.uk)  
Overlooking the pond and wild flowers at the vineyard.

